

Information on Maintaining or Restoring Water Quality in Buildings with Low or No Use

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) have provided guidance for maintaining or restoring water quality in buildings with low or no use.

The EPA has warned that building and business closures for weeks or months reduce water usage, potentially leading to stagnant water inside building plumbing. This water can become unsafe to drink or otherwise use for domestic or commercial purposes. EPA recommends that building owners and managers take proactive steps to protect public health by minimizing water stagnation during closures and taking action to address building water quality prior to reopening.

- [Maintaining or Restoring Water Quality in Buildings with Low or No Use \(PDF\)](#) (May 2020)
- [Checklist: Restoring Water Quality in Buildings for Reopening \(PDF\)](#) (May 2020)

According to the CDC, “Stagnant or standing water can cause conditions that increase the risk for growth and spread of Legionella and other biofilm-associated bacteria. When water is stagnant, hot water temperatures can decrease to the Legionella growth range (77–108°F, 25–42°C). Stagnant water can also lead to low or undetectable levels of disinfectant, such as chlorine. Ensure that your water system is safe to use after a prolonged shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires’ disease and other diseases associated with water.”

A water management plan is an essential step in the process of reopening a business to employees and the public. Each building system is unique and building owners may want to consult a professional to determine any necessary actions.

The CDC offers guidance on how to lessen the risks associated with water systems within buildings that have been temporarily vacant.

- [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#) (May 2020)

The scientists and engineers at the Environmental Science, Policy & Research Institute (ESPRI) and the International Code Council (ICC) each developed the brief guidance material in the documents linked below to help those who are responsible for maintaining building water systems.

- [Environmental Science and Policy Research Institute](#) (April 2020)
- [International Code Council](#) (April 2020)

The Fox Chapel Water Authority (FCA) water supplier Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) is monitoring disinfectant levels, and their drinking water treatment protocol includes filtration and disinfection procedures that are effective in removing viruses.

The water FCA supplies to our customers is safe to drink and to use for personal hygiene activities.

Please ensure that the guidance provided in this article is given full consideration and followed for buildings with low or no water use.